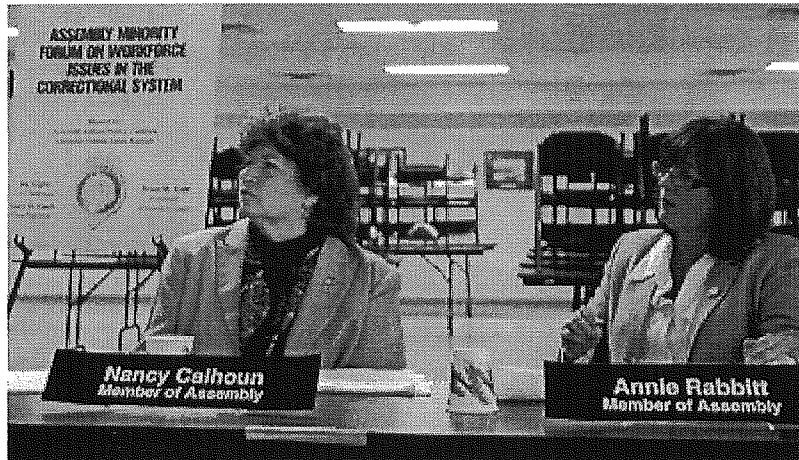


September 3, 2009

Copyright © 2009 Mid-Hudson News Network, a division of Statewide News Network, Inc.
This story may not be reproduced in any form without express written consent.

Assembly Republicans address workforce issues in N.Y.S. correctional system

NEW WINDSOR -
Assembly
Members Nancy
Calhoun (R,C-
Blooming Grove),
Annie Rabbitt
(R,I,C- Greenwood
Lake), Joel M.
Miller (R,C,I-
Poughkeepsie) and
Cliff Crouch (R,I-
Guilford) met at
the New Windsor
Community Center



Assemblymembers Calhoun and Rabbitt were two of the event organizers

to gather input and feedback from the dedicated professionals that work in area correctional facilities at a meeting of the Assembly Minority Statewide Forums on Workforce Issues in the Correctional System. Participants discussed ideas on how to best improve working conditions and make prisons safer for inmates, the staff that protects, serves and rehabilitates them, and the communities in which they are located.

“New York State correctional officers are given the daunting responsibility of maintaining safe and secure facilities while rehabilitating inmates. This forum is a chance to understand the issues correctional officers face in performing their daily tasks, specifically due to overcrowding and under staffing in the prisons,” said Calhoun. “We will gather the ideas expressed today and formulate a plan to address improving the correctional facilities across the state.”

“As the wife and mother of law enforcement officers, I admire the bravery of the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting the public from some of New York’s most dangerous criminals,” said Rabbitt. “I want to give them the tools they need to do their jobs. We are meeting today with correctional employees from the Hudson Valley and hearing their concerns and ideas on how to ensure that our government provides full rehabilitation for inmates in safe and secure correctional facilities.”

Among the corrections professionals in attendance were representatives from the New York State Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association, including President Donn Rowe, Executive-Vice President Chris Hickey, Mid-Hudson Vice President Kevin Walker. Also in attendance were the Chief Sector Stewards from Wallkill, Shawangunk and Eastern Correctional Facilities. Located in

Wallkill, NY, the Wallkill Correctional Facility is a medium security prison.

New York State has lost over 2,500 correction officers since 1999, with over 850 done away within the last eight months alone. Commissioner Fischer is fond of stating that we have 10,000 less inmates since 1999, yet during this same period we have watched the administration grow to over 900 non-security employees at their administration building in Albany. This doesn't even include the additional seven to ten layers of administrators at each of the sixty-nine prisons around the state. "I would simply ask, Why do we continue to employ such a large administration to oversee far less staff and inmates?" Asked Rowe.

"If Commissioner Fischer can go to the department of budget during this fiscal crisis and obtain a \$5.3 million dollar approval, for unnecessary administrative positions that don't ever watch inmates, I'm sure he can now go back and get funding to properly staff the prisons with correction officers and stop playing games with the safety of my members", said Rowe.

"It is imperative that the Legislature act on the concerns shared by corrections officers today," said Miller. "There are some real issues in staffing and prison overcrowding in New York State. I want to ensure that safety remains a priority, even in times of budgetary troubles. Corrections spending must be geared toward making sure we have the appropriate staffing levels to ensure the safety and security of our officers and inmates. Significant increases in administrators are hard to justify at this time."

Assembly Minority Leader Brian M. Kolb (R,C,I-Canandaigua) created the Assembly Minority Statewide Forums on Workforce Issues in the Correctional System to support and improve the safety and security of New York's detention facilities. The task force will hold meetings across Upstate New York in 2009. For more information, please call the Assembly Minority Office of Public Affairs at (518) 455-5073.

HEAR today's news on MidHudsonRadio.com, the Hudson Valley's *only* Internet radio news report.